

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MODERN LANGUAGES

CENTRE EUROPEEN POUR LES LANGUES VIVANTES

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Second medium-term programme of activities 2004-2007

**Project C2 – Qualitraining –
A Training Guide for Quality Assurance**

Report of the regional workshop
(Bath, United Kingdom, 6-8 October 2005)

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Working language:

English



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The report can be accessed on the ECML website: <http://www.ecml.at>

The Executive Director of the ECML should be informed about any full or partial translation of the report and a copy of the translation should be sent to the ECML for information.

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Participants included representatives from France, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Spain, The Netherlands, national organisations in the UK, the British Council, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, the National Association of Language Advisers and the Teacher Development Agency, together with locally invited senior managers and modern languages experts.

The workshop was held at the International Learning and Research Centre, near Bath.

After registration and a buffet lunch, during which participants were able to meet, mix and, in some cases, renew acquaintances, the Head of the International Learning and Research Centre welcomed all participants to the Workshop.

The workshop was formally opened by Rosalind Morton, Director of Bi-lateral Programmes, British Council (UK). An overview introduction to the ECML was given by Michèle Bergdoll, and Laura Muresan outlined the purposes of the Workshop – to consult participants about the development of the Guide to date and to refine materials further as a result of participants’ contributions during the Workshop. Links were made to the CD Rom. Everyone was invited to introduce themselves and, in groups, to describe their connections with quality.

Participants were introduced to the first unit in the Guide – ‘**Creating a Culture of Quality**’. The structure and content of the unit was outlined and the draft unit circulated. Self-assessment and reflection is a strategy used throughout the Guide. In Unit One this takes the form of key questions. Participants were invited to sample these questions as a group activity and to give feedback, for example

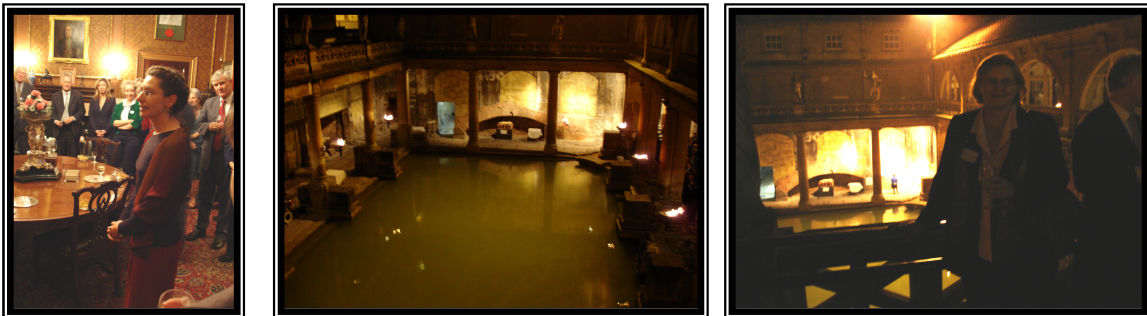
‘What influences the culture of your organisation?’

A range of interesting points arose from these discussions

- In initial teacher training there is a need to make quality assurance acceptable and to train for quality.
- How can quality be assured? This was a common questions, together with a recognition of country specific issues, for example, in France quality control is practised rather than quality assurance.
- An organisation’s legal and procedural responsibility and its defined market make a significant impact on its’ culture.
- It was accepted that quality in an organisation ‘belongs’ to all stakeholders, therefore the importance of students’ feedback was highlighted.
- Participants debated national systems, inspection, and why and how targets might be associated with quality.
- Links to the CD Rom produced during the ECML’s first medium term programme were made explicit.

The day finished with a Civic Reception at the Guildhall in Bath hosted by The Right Worshipful The Mayor of Bath, where the Mayor introduced participants to his role in the city and the mayoralty's treasures. This was followed by a Welcome Dinner at the Pump Room, attended by the Mayor. Workshop participants were able to view the brazier lit Roman Bath from the terrace, where a floodlit Bath Abbey as a backdrop made this a memorable scene and the social highlight for many participants.

"...the organisers of the Workshop managed to create a congenial atmosphere most favourable to good practice sharing and also to international relationships within Europe – from that point of view the use of the Roman Baths, a cultural reference more or less common to all countries represented (except Latvia and Norway) was most significant" (from a participant's evaluation)



The second day of the Workshop provided an introduction to the structure of the Guide and established a set of points for participants to consider when sampling sections of the Guide.

The following **Models for quality management** were discussed: a process model of quality, one based on results, one based on personal development and one value driven model. In addition, an organisation's client base was explored. Participants were invited to consider the process chains inherent in the models. Groups related these processes to their own contexts in order to explore the models.

Feedback from participants identified the following points:

- Guidance about the relationship between different models would be appreciated. It was suggested that the Values Model should come first and other models should be linked to this.
- It was suggested that an enquiry model should be added to the one for personal development.
- A circular presentation of the models would be helpful. Examples of good practice would show how these models link.

Group discussion centred around a further sample from this section of the Guide – **Developing Quality Criteria and Standards** for equipment and teaching materials. The Workshop then examined **skills, technologies and instruments**. The format and content of this section was outlined and its relationship with materials on the CD ROM explained and demonstrated. Participant groups selected activities to work on before considering a case

study. This was set in a medium-sized language school in Continental Europe where there were a number of conflicting influences on the school's practice. The task, which stimulated much discussion, was to outline the feedback that would be given.

At this point in the Workshop participants were given a demonstration of an e-learning tool, developed in a group of UK secondary schools with an Australian software company.

The following session focussed on the **evaluation and assessment of quality** – the purposes for the procedures and the systems used in the **assessment and evaluation of quality**. There was lively discussion about the differences between evaluation and assessment and the need to have both strands within a quality management system. As some European languages only have one word for both functions there was debate about the need for two verbs to describe the processes.

Benchmarking was defined and participants related this to their diverse settings and contexts, identifying different approaches to benchmarking. A typology of benchmarking was introduced:

- internal benchmarking
- functional benchmarking
- competitive benchmarking
- generic benchmarking.

Overall, it was agreed that benchmarking is an important tool in the identification and sharing of good practice.

Participants rounded off Friday's Workshop activities in the convivial and social atmosphere of the cellar of Tilley's bistro in Bath, where everyone had dinner. Following dinner some intrepid participants enjoyed the jazz music on offer in a pub halfway up the steep hill to the Lansdown Grove Hotel, where all Workshop participants stayed.

The final morning of the Workshop was devoted to participants' individual assessments of the Units of the Qualitraining Guide the following questions were addressed:

Is the topic relevant to your professional context?

Is the level appropriate? Too elementary? Too difficult?

Are the activities interesting? Useful? Challenging?

Is the format appropriate?

Participant Input

What would you add? What would you eliminate?

Is the tone and style of an appropriate level to use in your professional context?

Would you use it? Who with? How?

Further investigation of the ideas discussed, trialling of the guide and case studies which might be contributed were identified in national agency, individual country or interest groups and are summarised below.



National Association of Language Advisers [NALA] UK

This association has a combined private and public sector membership

- The Qualitraining Guide will make a very valuable contribution to NALA's work.
- The professional approach to quality is corroborated.
- The Qualitraining project provides an opportunity to establish networks of good practice across many member states.
- The Guide and an associated network will enable NALA members and others to pool materials from a wide range of settings. NALA is bringing together a set of Case Studies over the next two years – A virtual Case Study will be put together which will be shared.
- There is a longer term need to maintain a continuing professional network.

The Netherlands

- The work of the project will immediately contribute to a Quality Assurance Seminar at the end of November 2005. A group of Dutch schools is working with The European Platform and investigating ways to set standards for early foreign language learning.

France/The International Learning and Research Centre

- A bi-lateral project was proposed which would allow one aspect of language development to be focussed on by teachers of 7-14 year olds, working in cross phase networks. This project would seek to ensure quality through the processes of school-based research and enquiry. This could be Case Study material for the Qualitraining Guide.

Ireland

- The Qualitraining Guide will be extremely useful in the academic context.
- A benchmarking exercise is being carried out in third level education with partners in France, Spain and Italy.

Norway

- The Guide will link to ongoing projects in Norway.
- There is a new national centre for the learning of foreign languages in Norway.
- The Guide's self assessment activities are very useful in helping to develop reflective practitioners – it was rewarding to experience the activities.
- There is currently a quality reform programme in Norwegian Universities and Colleges.

Latvia

- The Guide will be very useful, there is a focus on developing Quality Assurance in Latvia, the material is therefore very relevant.
- The British Council has initiated a teacher development project in Latvia and this will be able to consider the issues raised by the Guide.
- There is a Latvian need to have Case Study material to draw from.

Sir Bernard Lovell Language College and the Kingswood Partnership [UK]

- The Guide will be useful for local centres and for a small scale partnership; it will strengthen a partnership approach to Quality Assurance and the partnership will investigate how to use/trial the approach in the draft materials.
- The group offered to provide Case Studies, one in relation to languages, and one in the development of a quality culture.
- The group was interested in exploring how to make a bridge from self-evaluation into Quality Assurance.

Spain

The Ministry of Education representative, co-ordinating teacher training, made the following points:

- Self evaluation and self assessment is of interest, for example, Spain has invested in developing use of the Portfolio.
- There is a need to create a quality culture and self assessment and then to develop self evaluation criteria, especially for languages.
- Much training for quality is planned.

Teacher Development Agency (TDA)

The TDA representatives, both teacher-trainers, made the following points –

- The Guide will be very useful for the TDA, particularly in the context of the development of early foreign language learning.
- Most interested in the self-reflection and observation instruments.
- Some joint work currently taking place in Higher Education between the UK and Spain.

Susanna Slivensky, Deputy Executive Director, ECML, made the closing remarks of the workshop and thanked everyone for their participation and contributions. All this would be carried forward to the second Regional Workshop of the project in Sofia in December

Mary Rose
October 2005